

Congressman and Caucus Reiterate Call for Administrative Action

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(Washington, DC) – Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL-4) and other Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) met with President Obama at the White House today to reiterate their call for the President to use the administrative powers he has under existing law to provide relief to certain groups of immigrants facing deportation. In particular, the CHC asked the President to prevent the deportation of immigrants who would be eligible for the DREAM Act and for their families, the family members of U.S. citizens, and other immigrants whose deportation is not in the national interest.

"It was a productive meeting and there is no longer a debate over whether the President has broad discretionary powers when it comes to deportations," the Congressman said after the meeting. "The question is how broad and how generous the President chooses to be. The meeting was not about granting legal status to the 12 million or so undocumented immigrants, but rather how to prioritize deporting drug dealers and gangsters, but not to deport DREAM Act students and the families of U.S. citizens."

The Congressman pointed to a legal memo (<http://bit.ly/kCVcxg>) written last week by two former General Counsels to the federal immigration service and other legal experts that indicates the President has wide discretion under current law to provide relief from deportation -- at least temporarily -- for some immigrants and to remove barriers that prevent others from getting legal status in this country. The Congressman prepared a similar memo for the President in February and Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus signed a letter to the President earlier this year requesting that he exercise these administrative powers.

"The Caucus was clear and emphatic about the need for administrative relief and the extent of the damage the deportations are causing to American families," the Congressman said.

"If you had been with me hearing the stories of U.S. citizens whose families are being ripped apart by deportations, you would agree that waiting, hoping, and fighting for legislation is not enough right now when the President can do something about it under current law," Rep. Gutierrez said referring to a national tour the Congressman launched in March to hear the stories of American children and families facing the deportation of family members. "This Sunday, I will be in South Bend, Indiana talking to more families and continuing to put a spotlight on the deportations until there is a definitive indication that relief is on the way."

The Congressman launched a nationwide tour of 20 or more cities in late March and the tour has stopped in fifteen cities so far (see <http://bit.ly/IREMpg> for the latest update). At each event, there is a public meeting where U.S. citizens and non-citizens testify in their own words about how deportations are affecting their families. Almost 400,000 people were deported last year by the U.S. government and fewer than half had criminal records. This rate of approximately 1,100 people per day is higher now than under the Bush Administration.

The meeting with the President, requested earlier this year by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus as a follow-up to one held last December, was attended by almost the entire Congressional Hispanic Caucus, which consists of 20 Democratic Members in the House and one in the U.S. Senate. Rep. Gutierrez is the Chair of the Immigration Taskforce of the CHC.

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